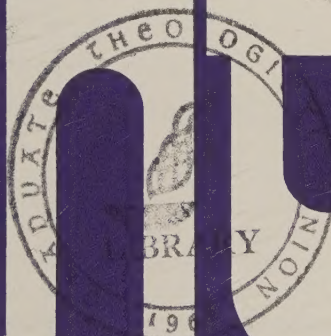


# Light

JAN 25 1985



.....ON A NEW WORLD

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# Gold that rusts

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MOST OF US have probably, at some time or another, been the proud possessor of a new acquisition—a motor car, perhaps, or a bicycle. Its paint and plating shine; it looks good; it performs well; it brings a bit of excitement into life. And yet, lurking in the back of the mind is the realisation that one day, quite soon, it will begin to show signs of age—the paint will dull, it will acquire scrapes and bumps, and rust will begin to make its appearance.

Yes, this illustrates a sad but fundamental fact of life—all things decay. Put more scientifically, we should say that all things are transformed: steel combines with oxygen and becomes rust, wood rots, or becomes riddled with worm, and collapses—the food of fungus or beetles; wool becomes the food of the moth grub (even man-made fibres are eaten and shred away); brick and stone are eroded by weather, or corroded by the chemical-laden atmosphere.

No guarantee, no corrosion warranty, no insurance policy can make the common material objects of life last for ever; the material objects of our pride and joy sooner or later decay, fade, fall down or break down. Even the precious metals of the earth—gold, diamonds, platinum—are lost or stolen. But even if they were not, we cannot keep our possessions for ever, because when we die they'll be no good to us in our graves.

Probably the people who get the most out of life are those who deal in ideas and concepts rather than physical objects. Such people as poets, musicians and artists receive great satisfaction in creating, and their creations can give pleasure to others long after they themselves have gone. At the same time there are many systems of ideas,



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and many works of music and literature in the world, which have become outdated, forgotten, or which have proved to be of limited use or influence. There is, however, work which does not suffer in this way—a work written not by man, but by God. It is, of course, the Bible.

### THE BIBLE HOPE

The Bible shows us that whilst all our material possessions may decay, rust, rot, be lost or stolen, there is one thing which is immune to all efforts to destroy it—the hope contained in the Bible. Jesus Christ tells about it in a story told to his followers. Here it is:

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’<sup>1</sup>

Jesus tells us quite clearly that material things—the things that money can buy—are corruptible and easily lost; and if we set our hearts on such things we will be disappointed. On the other hand, if we set our hearts upon ‘treasures stored up in heaven’ we will never lose them nor see them decay; they will be with us for ever.

### REAL PERMANENCE

‘Treasures in heaven’, may sound very insubstantial, are in fact very real. God is in heaven, and the treasure which we can store up in heaven, is stored with God. The Bible tells us very clearly that it is God’s purpose to set up on earth a new system of divine government with Christ as the ruler, assisted by his followers. It won’t be like any other kingdom or democracy; it will be peaceful, disease will have been conquered, poverty eradicated, conflict ended—perfection. The Bible also tells us that it will happen very soon—when Jesus Christ comes back to the earth. The Bible is full of prophecies about the coming of Christ; nine-tenths of these signs have already happened, and soon Christ will return from heaven.

How do we ‘store up’ treasures in heaven? By making God and His purpose the centre of our lives. Christ is the pattern for us to follow; he believed God—His purpose with the earth—His promise to raise him on the third day—His promise to set up His Kingdom. We can follow him by believing in the Bible, by having faith in God’s purpose, by obeying God’s laws, by becoming associated with Jesus’ mission and baptism. This is laying up treasures in heaven. This treasure is incorruptible, it cannot be taken from us or be lost, because it is safe in God’s hands. Safe and incorruptible—that is, *if* we hold it at the centre of our lives, if it really is the thing we treasure above all else.

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 6. 19-21 (N.I.V.)

## MATERIAL POSSESSIONS—OR OBSESSIONS?

It is very easy for us to become over-anxious or obsessed by material things. This is the material world, where we tend only to believe what we can see, or touch; indeed, we are constantly amazed at the things which can be achieved by man's inventions. But none of them can make peace, none of them can ease poverty, none of them can fill empty bellies, none of them can help us live for ever. The source of true satisfaction has been in our hands for nearly 2,000 years, in the Bible. Jesus told his followers, 'Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you'<sup>2</sup>

With God's purpose at the centre of our lives, our treasure in heaven, even life and survival itself takes second place.

In our uncertain world it is perhaps natural for us to cling to the things we possess and cherish—they give us security. But the laws of the universe tell us that our clothes, carpets and curtains will get the moth, or crumble away, our shiny cars will quietly rust away and expire. And our gold? These days our 'gold' is maybe in savings, investments, real estate; but a slump, or a change of government, perhaps, will soon reduce their buying power. Material possessions do *not* give security.

Gold, in Christ's perspective, is as flimsy as the clothes we wear. One of Christ's disciples, Peter, wrote concerning the true Christian hope that our redemption is not achieved 'with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ'<sup>3</sup> and that through Christ's resurrection we have hope of 'an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away'.<sup>4</sup>

The process of rusting, decaying, rotting are all scientifically observed processes, by which one substance changes into another—oxygen and iron combine to form rust, food becomes the food of moths, wood the food of fungus and beetle. So our treasures, whether they are new cars, houses, furnishings or boats, soon become transformed into rubbish; likewise our investments or savings into red figures on the Bank account statement. This will be our experience if we set our hearts on the treasures of this world.

## THE REAL CHANGE

There is another, quite different, kind of transformation, which Paul, Jesus' apostle, tells us about:

'In view of God's mercy . . . offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 6. 31, 33    <sup>3</sup>1 Peter 1. 18-24    <sup>4</sup>1 Peter 1. 4    <sup>5</sup>Romans 12. 1, 2 (N.I.V.)

This is the best treasure of all—service to God, the renewing of our minds to God's way, so that the transformation we shall experience will be to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

P. H. Evans  
Banstead

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## WHICH WAY?

The Narrow Way that leads to Life?  
The Broad that leads to Death?  
Too late 'twill be to make the choice  
When taking our last breath.  
Too late 'twill be to show regret  
When all our life is spent.  
No tears or sighs will then avail  
If we so late repent.

God asks our service while we *live*,  
With heart and mind and strength,  
And only those who render this  
Will He accept at length.  
'What man sows he'll also reap'  
Is what the scriptures teach;  
Man's disobedience led to death  
And God alone can heal the breach.

'Tis not for man to make his terms  
But humbly to submit,  
And only those with childlike faith  
Are for His kingdom fit;  
That kingdom promised for the earth  
When Jesus comes again  
To sit on David's throne, restored,  
O'er all the world to reign.

D.R.S.



# The shorter prophets

## 2—Joel

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THIS LITTLE PROPHECY of only three chapters has basically a very simple theme—the great devastation of the land of Israel by a great plague of locusts. God is bringing heavy affliction on His people as a punishment for their neglect to obey His laws. His urgent message is that the nation must return to God wholeheartedly, and not merely with outward compliance.<sup>1</sup> Once the people respond to the call for repentance, the Lord will be jealous for His land and have pity on His people, restoring ‘*the years that the locust hath eaten*’.<sup>2</sup>

The graphic description of the progress of such a locust swarm<sup>3</sup> incorporates terms which liken it to an invading *human* army. There are references here to chariots and soldiers,<sup>4</sup> mighty men and men of war,<sup>5</sup> even the word ‘army’ itself, with its camp.<sup>6</sup> Correspondingly, foreign armies which invaded Israel in Biblical times were sometimes compared to locusts because of their vast numbers and the devastation they caused.<sup>7</sup> The last chapter of Joel describes another, still future, incursion into the land at a period when God’s people have suffered dispersion among the nations.<sup>8</sup> It is at this time, the prophet tells us, that God will gather *all nations* into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and ‘*stand*’ with them there for the evil they have perpetrated on His people. In Scriptural idiom ‘*stand*’ means ‘inflict punishment’, likened here to a grape harvest—these nations will be cut down and trampled under foot like ripe grape clusters cut down with a sickle and trodden in the winepress.<sup>9</sup> ‘*Never again will foreigners invade her . . . Judah will be inhabited for ever and Jerusalem through all generations*,’<sup>10</sup> blessed with God’s goodness and His abiding presence.<sup>11</sup> This, in sum, is Joel’s message.

### WHEN DID JOEL PROPHECY?

It will be seen that the prophet’s theme is clear enough in principle; its outcome is implicit, yet still to be fulfilled. Before we consider the book in a little more detail it

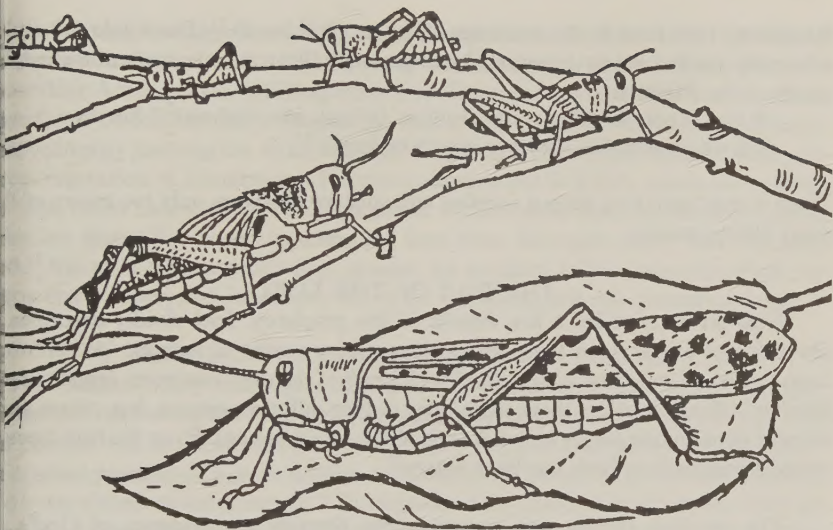
would be helpful to place the prophet in his historical setting. It is here that we run into uncertainty, for unlike most of the books of the prophets this one carries no statement about which king was reigning in Joel's time. True, the temple worship is being maintained—but is this Solomon's temple before the exile to Babylon or the rebuilt 'second temple' after the Jews' return? A possible clue to the time of the prophecy is the position of this book in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament made for the Jews of Alexandria in the second century B.C. The translators, who lived much nearer the time of the 'Minor Prophets' and might well have been better informed about the period of their ministry than were later generations, have clearly put the 'dated-by-reign' books in approximately chronological order (as they also did with the separate series of the 'major' prophets Isaiah-Daniel). Joel they placed immediately after Micah, whose prophecy was given in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah around the beginning of the seventh century B.C.<sup>12</sup> It is possible therefore that Joel lived and prophesied somewhere around this era. The prophet Amos, a contemporary of Micah, twice refers in his book to locust attacks which had already plagued Israel; these depredations *may* have been the occasion of Joel's warnings, but of course, in the absence of firmer evidence, this is only speculation.

### REAL LOCUSTS OR HUMAN ARMIES?

It is questionable, however, whether a LITERAL locust plague is in Joel's mind, in view of the close parallel drawn here between the devastation caused by locust swarms and that wreaked by invading armies. An excellent example of this similarity is provided by the much earlier 'army of occupation' described in the Book of Judges when Midianites from the east invaded and ravaged the land, ruining its crops. We read: '*They came in as locusts for multitude*',<sup>14</sup> as a result of which Israel was greatly impoverished. That devastation lasted for seven years. A much later threat in the reign of Jehoshaphat, when again peoples east of the River Jordan swarmed into the Judean kingdom in vast numbers,<sup>15</sup> was averted by the king's prompt action in calling for fasting and for prayer to God (in accordance with Solomon's plea when dedicating the first temple).<sup>16</sup>

Jehoshaphat's prayer was heard, the invaders quarrelled amongst themselves and destroyed one another, so that the joyful Israelites were able to reap a rich harvest of jewellery and other treasures from the vanquished foe.<sup>17</sup> This historical precedent (supported by the double reference in Joel to '*the valley of Jehoshaphat*'!)<sup>18</sup> should be borne in mind when reading this prophecy which (as often in Scripture)<sup>19</sup> views an impending event as already having taken place. The Almighty, says Joel, is willing to halt the invasion and turn it back—if only His people repent of their neglect and mend their ways.<sup>20</sup> Such reversal of the divine intention is described as God's '*repenting*' of the evil He purposed. It is however no vacillation or weakness on God's part, but a perfectly reasonable (and merciful) change of attitude in response to Israel's repentance. Similarly God '*repented of the evil*' He had determined against Nineveh when





ix stages in the life-cycle of the migratory or desert locust with the winged adult in the foreground.

**LOCUST.** The locust is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament on account of its devastating habits. It is alluded to in AV under the names 'beetle', 'cankerworm', 'caterpillar', 'grass-hopper', 'locust', and 'palmer-worm'. It belongs to the family *Orthoptera* which consists of two groups, 'runners' (*Cursoria*), unclean under the levitical law, and 'leapers' (*Saltatoria*), 'which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth' regarded as clean (Lv. xi. 20-23).

The female locust lays her eggs in holes in the earth, which she digs by means of a special apparatus. They hatch out as wingless larvae, which hop about devouring all vegetation on which they alight. After a series of moults they develop wings and rise in clouds into the air.

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inhabitants took heed to the warnings of the prophet Jonah.<sup>21</sup> The whole principle admirably spelled out by Jeremiah<sup>22</sup> and perfectly illustrates the truth of the inspiring words of the Psalmist:

'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'<sup>23</sup>

These words have long been a comfort and spur for believers only too aware of their many shortcomings.

### THE DAY OF THE LORD

Now let us consider a few details of this prophecy. Joel vividly describes the devouring of every green thing by four successive waves of insects: '*palmerworm, locust, cankerworm and caterpillar*'<sup>24</sup>—literally: '*shearer, swarmer, lapper-up and finisher*.' (Some scholars think these refer to four different species, but others regard them as consecutive stages in the growth of the desert locust). Even the fruit trees are ruined because their bark has been eaten.<sup>25</sup>

The resulting famine and accompanying drought are evidence of God's displeasure;<sup>26</sup> various classes of the people—elders, drunkards and farmers—weep and lament their loss of prosperity.<sup>27</sup> The priests are admonished to put on sackcloth and fast before God, and to cry out to Him to save their nation from disaster.<sup>28</sup> Such '*visitations*' of God's anger are the main features of what is called '*the day of the Lord*',<sup>29</sup> a name often used in the Bible for any occasion when God intervenes to punish evildoers on the earth and to vindicate the cause of His people (whether Jew or Christian). The greatest day of the Lord will be at the second coming of Jesus.<sup>30</sup> It is the awesome occasion which the prophet foresees in chapter 3, when Israel will be finally delivered from its enemies.<sup>31</sup> But it is, in fact, the last of a whole series of such 'days' each in turn predicted by the prophets of Israel and now—apart from the final one—part of recorded history. In the past Israel has been engulfed successively by Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans (who in turn suffered heavy punishments).<sup>32</sup> Each visitation, whether against Jew or Gentile, was a 'Day of the Lord'.

### GOD'S COMING JUDGMENTS ON ISRAEL'S FOES

The express promise here of Israel's permanent prosperity and blessing still awaits its fulfilment; it brings the prophetic vision very much into our own day, now that the Jews have at long last returned to their own land. Nevertheless they are still ignorant of God's control of their destiny and of the role of Jesus as their Saviour and coming King. Over the centuries they have suffered greatly in Gentile lands, throughout which they have been scattered and enslaved.<sup>33</sup>

In this final phase, chapter 3 names Egypt and Edom in particular for the violence and cruelty perpetrated against Israel.<sup>34</sup> Edom probably stands for the Arabs

eral; it is not, we suggest, entirely coincidental that the Hebrew words for 'locust' and 'Arab' sound very much alike! We may well see further attacks on Israel by the surrounding Arab nations, fulfilling other Old Testament prophecies<sup>35</sup> and justifying the sentence of condemnation uttered by Joel in this chapter.<sup>36</sup> But Israel's greatest enemy, strongly backing the Arab cause in the Middle East, is the Soviet Union (the violent repression of Zionism and Hebrew culture in the U.S.S.R. makes two million Jews little better than slaves).<sup>37</sup> It is this power with its allies that is destined by God to be the last locust-like army, invading the land from the north like a dark eclipsing shadow.<sup>38</sup> But as in Jehoshaphat's day, so now; the invaders will be induced to fight and destroy one another, and Jerusalem will be for ever freed from the devouring sword.<sup>39</sup>

### THE CULMINATING BLESSING ON ISRAEL

Joel outlines many blessings which God will bestow upon His land and people, and these are confirmed and sometimes enlarged on in the other prophetic writings. The Lord Himself will be the permanent guardian of Israel, like a lion protecting its cubs.<sup>40</sup> The original promise of a land '*flowing with milk and honey*' is to become a reality, secured by an abundant water supply.<sup>41</sup> But together with these material benefits there are even more important spiritual blessings—hinted at in the mention of a fountain of living water flowing from the temple: Zechariah explains that this is to cleanse the people from sin (moral) uncleanness.<sup>42</sup> By this means the people's terrible blood guilt ('*His blood is on us, and on our children*', was their cry at the end of the trial of Jesus)<sup>43</sup> will at last be forgiven, and Israel restored to God's favour for all generations.<sup>44</sup>

Then the Holy Spirit will be poured out on the WHOLE nation—the fulfilment of the Lord's prophecy<sup>44</sup> which had an initial but only partial implementation on the day of Pentecost following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle Peter quotes the passage from Joel but stops short in the middle of verse 32.<sup>45</sup> This was because in that day only a small proportion of Israel took advantage of the call to repentance. In the future all the nation will '*look on him whom they pierced*' and mourn their wrongdoing,<sup>46</sup> '*so all Israel shall be saved*'.<sup>47</sup>

### 'PREPARE WAR . . . '

In conclusion, if we trust God implicitly that His revealed purpose will be realised in due course we need not fear for the future, not even the threat of a nuclear or conventional war. It is true that in preparation for this coming conflict on the mountains of Israel God is already at work, stirring up the nations to re-arm and prepare for war, as Joel says.<sup>48</sup> The unprecedented arms build-up between the so-called 'great powers' (but they are puny indeed compared with the power of God, as any earthquake or even thunderstorm makes clear) is one of the sure signs that we are in '*the time of the Lord*'. The great and terrible 'Day of the Lord' must be very near indeed, but no-one who sincerely calls upon His name will be disappointed; His salvation is freely available to all who truly seek to do His will. Their reward will be rulership with Jesus, a Kingdom



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of priests in that new era he is soon to establish on earth.<sup>49</sup> When he reigns the re-arm process will be reversed:

'... they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more... for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.'<sup>50</sup>

J. H. Brough  
Pontesb

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

(to Joel unless otherwise stated)

<sup>1</sup>2. 12, 13   <sup>2</sup>2. 18, 25   <sup>3</sup>2. 1-11   <sup>4</sup>2. 4, 5   <sup>5</sup>2. 7   <sup>6</sup>2. 11, 25

<sup>7</sup>Judges 6. 5; cp. Jeremiah 51. 14, 27   <sup>8</sup>3. 2, 6

<sup>9</sup>3. 13; Isaiah 63. 1-6; Revelation 14. 17-20; 19. 15   <sup>10</sup>3. 17, 20 (N.I.V.)   <sup>11</sup>3. 17, 20

<sup>12</sup>Micah 1. 1   <sup>13</sup>Amos 4. 9: 7. 1   <sup>14</sup>Judges 6. 5 (R.V.)   <sup>15</sup>II Chronicles 20. 1, 2

<sup>16</sup>II Chronicles 6. 30   <sup>17</sup>II Chronicles 20. 25   <sup>18</sup>3. 2, 12   <sup>19</sup>Genesis 17. 5; Romans 4. 17

<sup>20</sup>2. 14   <sup>21</sup>Jonah 3. 10   <sup>22</sup>Jeremiah 18. 1-12   <sup>23</sup>Psalm 130. 3, 4   <sup>24</sup>1. 4; 2. 25   <sup>25</sup>1. 1

<sup>26</sup>Deuteronomy 28. 42   <sup>27</sup>1. 2, 5, 11   <sup>28</sup>1. 13; 2. 17   <sup>29</sup>1. 15; 2. 1, 11, 31; 3. 14

<sup>30</sup>II Thessalonians 1. 5-10; 2. 1, 2, 8; II Peter 3. 8-13   <sup>31</sup>3. 12 ff   <sup>32</sup>Isaiah 10. 12-19; 13. 1, 2

<sup>33</sup>3. 2   <sup>34</sup>3. 19   <sup>35</sup>Isaiah 34. 5-8; 63. 1-6; Ezekiel 35; Obadiah   <sup>36</sup>3. 2-6

<sup>37</sup>GILBERT, M. *The Jews of Russia* London: National Council for Soviet Jewry 1976

<sup>38</sup>2. 10, 20; 3. 15; Ezekiel 38. 9, 15, 16   <sup>39</sup>Ezekiel 38. 21-23

<sup>40</sup>3. 16; Psalm 76. 1, 2 (R.V. margin); Isaiah 31. 4, 5; Jeremiah 25. 30-31

<sup>41</sup>3. 18; 2. 23, 24; Isaiah 62. 8, 9; Jeremiah 31. 10-12; Amos 9. 13   <sup>42</sup>3. 18; Zechariah 1. 18

<sup>43</sup>3. 21 (R.V. margin); Jeremiah 50. 20   <sup>44</sup>2. 28-32   <sup>45</sup>Acts 2. 16-21

<sup>46</sup>Zechariah 12. 10 (R.V. margin); John 19. 37   <sup>47</sup>Romans 11. 26   <sup>48</sup>3. 9, 10

<sup>49</sup>II Timothy 2. 11, 12; Revelation 5. 9, 10; 20. 6   <sup>50</sup>Micah 4. 3, 4

# Bible teaching about . . . the Devil

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FROM ANCIENT TIMES the subject of the 'Devil' (or 'Satan') has provided a popular theme for the world's orators, writers and artists. Both pagan and so-called 'christian' pictures depict, in fearsome words and terrifying imagery, a fiendish monster, the supposed 'king of the underworld', who uses every possible device to seduce men, women and children into doing wrong.

In religious circles, the Devil is commonly believed to be a 'fallen angel' cast out of heaven in the aftermath of war against God. With his attendant 'evil spirits' he vies with God for the 'souls of men'.

The doctrines of the Churches support these ideas. For example, the Roman Catholic Church teaches:

'Before creating man God created the pure spirits whom we call the Angels. They too were tested as man was. Some of them refused to obey and so lost Heaven. Hell came into existence. They are the devils. Their leader is called in the Scriptures Lucifer, Satan, Beelzebub, Belial, the Devil.'<sup>1</sup>

The Church of England, the late Bishop of Bradford wrote:

'The Christian religion puts before us the idea of diabolical agencies. We can trace the growth of this idea in the Bible; we know that Our Lord and His apostles took it for granted; Christian teaching in all ages has warned us of the operation of such agencies. In the pictures which men have formed of angelic and diabolic powers, there cannot help being a certain amount of "mythologizing".'<sup>2</sup>

The idea of a personal Devil is also vigorously defended by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Catholic Enquiry Centre Leaflet No. 7    <sup>2</sup>*'What the Church teaches'* by A. W. F. Blunt, p. 17

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They claim:

'The Devil—a mighty spirit person, an angel. Originally a righteous cherub of God's creation by means of the Word, the First-begotten Son of God. He was not created a devil or Satan, but made himself such by his rebellion against Almighty God. He was the beginner and introducer of sin in the universe, and is extremely wicked, the great enemy of God and all his righteous creatures.'<sup>3</sup>

But we have to ask—Are these ideas scriptural? And if they are not, what is the Devil (and Satan)?

It will help if we start by considering the meanings of these two words. Taking 'satan' first: this is actually a Hebrew word transferred into the English language. It means 'adversary' as a noun, and as a verb 'to be an adversary', 'to resist', 'to withstand'. In the Old Testament it is translated 14 times as 'adversary' or 'to be an adversary/to resist/to withstand'. Fifteen times it is merely transferred and rendered 'satan', and in most of these cases the alternative 'adversary' is given in the margin. In the New Testament, the Greek 'satan' or 'satanas' is uniformly rendered 'satan' (even when it is used indisputably of *human beings*).

Coming next to the word 'devil': this is found only in the New Testament ('devil' plural, occurs 4 times in the Old Testament but clearly refers to 'idols'). Two words in the Greek are so translated. One is 'diabolos', which means basically 'false accuser', 'slanderer' (and is so rendered on 3 occasions). The other root word is 'daimonion', meaning 'demon'.

Does the Bible lend any support to the orthodox idea that the Devil or Satan is a fallen angel with immense power, tempting man away from God? The answer is emphatic 'No'.

Let us examine some of the passages of Scripture where the word 'satan' occurs. Christ said to Peter, when that disciple suggested a course of action inappropriate to the purpose of God: 'Get thee behind me, Satan: . . . thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that be of men.'<sup>4</sup> Satan is translated 'adversary', and indeed that was what Peter was at that time. There is no implication here of the 'Satan' of popular belief. Exactly the same phrase was used by Christ to dismiss the tempter (called 'the devil' in the gospel records) when he was led into the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry. Again there is no indication of the fearsome creature of Christendom here.

Even God is referred to as Satan! In Chronicles we read: 'And Satan stood against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.'<sup>5</sup> The parallel record in Samuel

<sup>3</sup>'Make Sure of All Things' (1953 ed.) p. 97    <sup>4</sup>Matthew 15. 23    <sup>5</sup>1 Chronicles 21. 1



: 'And again the anger of THE LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved  
id against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah'.<sup>6</sup> On this occasion God  
self was an 'adversary' (or 'satan') to David.

Again, in the book of Numbers we are told about Balaam, who was hired by Balak  
urse Israel. But his way was barred by an angel of the Lord, who said: '*Behold, I  
t out TO WITHSTAND thee, (Hebrew 'satan'—to be an adversary) because thy  
is perverse before me.*'<sup>7</sup> Here one of God's angels is an adversary, a satan.

Often quoted by proponents of a superhuman 'satan' is the case of Job. He was a  
teous man, but the time came when he was sorely tried. The record tells us: 'Now  
e was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and  
in came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Whence comest thou?'  
n Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from  
king up and down in it'. And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Hast thou considered my  
ant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one  
feareth God and escheweth evil?' Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'Doth  
fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house,  
about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and  
ubstance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he  
s, and he will curse thee to thy face'. And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Behold, all that  
ath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand'. So Satan went forth  
the presence of the Lord'.<sup>8</sup> It is claimed that here we have an example of Satan's  
powers at work. However, it must first be asked, How is it that Satan and the Lord  
e able to converse, and even reach agreement as to how Job was to be tried—if the  
n involved is the mighty arch-enemy of God? Understand the word to mean 'the  
ersary' and there is no problem. For the purpose of Job's trial, *the Lord* gave this  
ersary (whoever he was) the power to afflict Job. Job himself recognised this, for he  
: '*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*'.<sup>9</sup> Again, when the trial was over  
ead that Job's family '*comforted him over all the evil that THE LORD had brought  
a him*'.<sup>10</sup> The writer has often challenged Jehovah's Witnesses on this point, and  
insist that Job and his friends made a mistake when they attributed his evil to God  
not to Satan! This is not good enough, because God acknowledged that Job spoke  
*things which is right*'.<sup>11</sup>

It will be found that in all cases where the word 'satan' occurs, its significance is  
y understood if the word 'adversary' is substituted, for that is what it means.

We come now to the word 'devil' and 'devils', as used in the New Testament:  
y, the word translated from the Greek 'diabolos', meaning 'slanderer', 'false

Samuel 24. 1    <sup>7</sup>Numbers 22. 32    <sup>8</sup>Job. 1. 6-12    <sup>9</sup>Job 1. 21    <sup>10</sup>Job 42. 11    <sup>11</sup>Job 42. 8

accuser'. Again, its straightforward interpretation in terms of human beings or the tendencies of human nature or human ways is evident when we look at the passage where it occurs. *'Have not I chosen you twelve', said Jesus, 'and one of you is the devil'*<sup>12</sup>—referring to Judas Iscariot. *'The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried'*<sup>13</sup>—referring to persecution by the pagan authorities. *'He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.'*<sup>14</sup>—clear reference to the sin of Adam and Eve, resulting in the introduction of death into the world, and its eventual abolition through the work of Christ.

This leads us to a consideration of Christ's role in destroying 'the works of the devil'. In Hebrews we read: *'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.'*<sup>15</sup> In this context, the devil is him (or that) which has the power of death. Exactly the same idea is expressed in Romans, where we read: *'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.'*<sup>16</sup> According to this passage, the work of Christ was to condemn 'sin in the flesh'. Thus 'the devil' is equivalent to 'sin in the flesh'—in other words, the evil thoughts of the human mind. The Apostle Paul confirms this when he attributes the *'sin that dwelleth in me'*<sup>17</sup> not to the temptations of a superhuman power for evil, but to his own human inclinations: *'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.'*<sup>18</sup> This was also stated by Christ himself, who said: *'OUT OF THE HEART proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.'*<sup>19</sup> We should not blame a supposed personal 'devil' for what originates in our own evil mind.

Now a few words should be said about 'devils' or 'demons'. Many times in the gospel records we read of Christ 'casting out devils'. Are these actually spirit demons of the underworld which, possessing a man, cause him to suffer mental afflictions? On Christ's day, this was the common belief. Today, we recognise these same diseases under the general heading of epilepsy and other disorders of the brain. What Christ was to heal the people so afflicted without troubling the victims with an explanation of the exact nature of their disease, which they would not have understood anyway. Merely employing the idiom of the day did not mean that he accepted the common belief in demons, any more than we regard 'lunatics' as being influenced by the phases of the moon, although that is what the word implies.

<sup>12</sup>John 6. 70    <sup>13</sup>Revelation 2. 10    <sup>14</sup>I John 3. 8    <sup>15</sup>Hebrews 2. 14    <sup>16</sup>Romans 8. 3  
<sup>17</sup>Romans 7. 17    <sup>18</sup>Romans 7. 22, 23    <sup>19</sup>Matthew 15. 19

We trust sufficient has been said in this brief article to indicate the truth concerning Devil and Satan, as revealed in the Bible. We conclude with another quotation, this time from the well known churchman of the last century, Dean Farrar. He wrote in his *Life of Christ*:

'The word Satan means no more than 'adversary' and, as in many passages of the Old Testament, is so far from meaning the great Adversary of mankind, that it is even applied to opposing angels. The word, in fact, was among the Jews, as in the East generally, and to this day, a very common one for anything bold, powerful, dangerous—for every secret opponent or open enemy.'<sup>20</sup>

Only all pronouncements by religious leaders were as Scriptural as this, many Church doctrines would be exposed for what they are—the teaching of men rather than the words of God!

L. L. F. Deadman

### THE BETTER WAY

'Better to be of an humble spirit with the lowly  
than to divide the spoil with the strong' Proverbs 16: 19.

'Better is a little, with the fear of the Lord,  
than great treasures and troubles therewith' Proverbs 15: 16.

'Better is it to get wisdom than gold;  
and understanding rather than silver' Proverbs 16: 16.

'Better to suffer for well-doing than evil-doing'  
1 Peter 3: 17.

'Better to hear the rebuke of the wise,  
than to hear the song of fools' Ecclesiastes 7:5.

'Better to trust in the Lord  
than to put confidence in man' Psalm 118: 8.



# BIBLE READING TABLES

| DECEMBER |              |              |               |  |
|----------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--|
| 1        | Esther 9, 10 | Jonah 1      | Heb. 6, 7     |  |
| 2        | Job 1, 2     | ..... 2, 3   | ..... 8, 9    |  |
| 3        | ..... 3, 4   | ..... 4      | ..... 10      |  |
| 4        | ..... 5      | Micah 1      | ..... 11      |  |
| 5        | ..... 6, 7   | ..... 2      | ..... 12      |  |
| 6        | ..... 8      | ..... 3, 4   | ..... 13      |  |
| 7        | ..... 9      | ..... 5      | James 1       |  |
| 8        | ..... 10     | ..... 6      | ..... 2       |  |
| 9        | ..... 11     | ..... 7      | ..... 3, 4    |  |
| 10       | ..... 12     | Nahum 1, 2   | ..... 5       |  |
| 11       | ..... 13     | ..... 3      | 1 Peter 1     |  |
| 12       | ..... 14     | Habakkuk 1   | ..... 2       |  |
| 13       | ..... 15     | ..... 2      | ..... 3, 4, 5 |  |
| 14       | ..... 16, 17 | ..... 3      | 2 Peter 1, 2  |  |
| 15       | ..... 18, 19 | Zeph. 1      | ..... 3       |  |
| 16       | ..... 20     | ..... 2      | 1 John 1, 2   |  |
| 17       | ..... 21     | ..... 3      | ..... 3, 4    |  |
| 18       | ..... 22     | Hag. 1, 2    | ..... 5       |  |
| 19       | ..... 23, 24 | Zech. 1      | 2 & 3 John    |  |
| 20       | ..... 25, 27 | ..... 2, 3   | Jude          |  |
| 21       | ..... 28     | ..... 4, 5   | Rev. 1, 2     |  |
| 22       | ..... 29, 30 | ..... 6, 7   | ..... 3, 4    |  |
| 23       | ..... 31, 32 | ..... 8      | ..... 5, 6    |  |
| 24       | ..... 33     | ..... 9      | ..... 7, 8, 9 |  |
| 25       | ..... 34     | ..... 10     | ..... 10, 11  |  |
| 26       | ..... 35, 36 | ..... 11     | ..... 12, 13  |  |
| 27       | ..... 37     | ..... 12     | ..... 14      |  |
| 28       | ..... 38     | ..... 13, 14 | ..... 15, 16  |  |
| 29       | ..... 39     | Malachi 1    | ..... 17, 18  |  |
| 30       | ..... 40     | ..... 2      | ..... 19, 20  |  |
| 31       | ..... 41, 42 | ..... 3, 4   | ..... 21, 22  |  |

| JANUARY |              |              |          |  |
|---------|--------------|--------------|----------|--|
| 1       | Gen. 1, 2    | Psa. 1, 2    | Matt. 1, |  |
| 2       | ..... 3, 4   | ..... 3, 5   | ..... 3, |  |
| 3       | ..... 5, 6   | ..... 6, 8   | .....    |  |
| 4       | ..... 7, 8   | ..... 9, 10  | .....    |  |
| 5       | ..... 9, 10  | ..... 11, 13 | .....    |  |
| 6       | ..... 11, 12 | ..... 14, 16 | .....    |  |
| 7       | ..... 13, 14 | ..... 17     | .....    |  |
| 8       | ..... 15, 16 | ..... 18     | .....    |  |
| 9       | ..... 17, 18 | ..... 19, 21 | .....    |  |
| 10      | ..... 19     | ..... 22     | .....    |  |
| 11      | ..... 20, 21 | ..... 23, 25 | .....    |  |
| 12      | ..... 22, 23 | ..... 26, 28 | .....    |  |
| 13      | ..... 24     | ..... 29, 30 | .....    |  |
| 14      | ..... 25, 26 | ..... 31     | .....    |  |
| 15      | ..... 27     | ..... 32     | .....    |  |
| 16      | ..... 28, 29 | ..... 33     | .....    |  |
| 17      | ..... 30     | ..... 34     | .....    |  |
| 18      | ..... 31     | ..... 35     | .....    |  |
| 19      | ..... 32, 33 | ..... 36     | .....    |  |
| 20      | ..... 34, 35 | ..... 37     | .....    |  |
| 21      | ..... 36     | ..... 38     | .....    |  |
| 22      | ..... 37     | ..... 39, 40 | .....    |  |
| 23      | ..... 38     | ..... 41, 43 | .....    |  |
| 24      | ..... 39, 40 | ..... 44     | .....    |  |
| 25      | ..... 41     | ..... 45     | .....    |  |
| 26      | ..... 42, 43 | ..... 46, 48 | .....    |  |
| 27      | ..... 44, 45 | ..... 49     | Rom. 1,  |  |
| 28      | ..... 46, 47 | ..... 50     | ..... 3, |  |
| 29      | ..... 48, 50 | ..... 51, 52 | ..... 5, |  |
| 30      | Exod. 1, 2   | ..... 53, 55 | ..... 7, |  |
| 31      | ..... 3, 4   | ..... 56, 57 | .....    |  |

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:  
Fear God, and keep his commandments:  
For this is the whole duty of man.'*

(Ecclesiastes 12. 13)

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